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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December 17, 2020

## Shaking the Foundations

As 2020 comes to a close, we look back over the year, a year that is ending very differently than it began. It feels like a million years ago, but a lot of the communities I am a part of were looking to 2020 to be a year to review, a year of introspection, a year “Reflecting on our past, Focusing on our future.” That was even supposed to be the theme for our Annual Meeting! In a lot of ways, it feels like this visioning and reflection was derailed as we all scrambled to adjust online ministry in March and a world facing multiple pandemics. But in a lot of other ways, 2020 forced us, the church, to reflect in ways I am not sure would have happened had the last 10 months gone according to plan.



Last week, Conference, Association, and National staff, as well as COM Chairs from across the denomination, gathered online for our biannual gathering called Authorizing Ministry for the 21st Century. Its purpose is to help think through how ministry is changing in the 21st Century and how our work as Conference Staff has to shift to facilitate the changing ministries that are already being created. This year, our theme was “Shaking the Foundations” which speaks deeply to the reality most of us have faced this year. The foundations of so much of our lives have been shaken, from what it means to be the Church to what it means to live in America. A lot of those foundations needed to be shaken up because they had been built on systems and ideals such as racism, sexism, ableism, and a whole host of other ‘isms that are not at the heart of the Gospel but have been a part of our institutions. 2020 has brought all of those foundations to the surface and forced those who have not seen the ‘isms in ourselves to

take long hard looks at ourselves. 2020 has forced us to reflect on our past, on how we have gotten here, as a county, community, at the Church.

The conversations I was a part of last gives me a lot of hope that as these foundations are shaking and falling down, what we are finding in the rubble is the heart of our foundations, the heart who we are meant to be: followers of Jesus Christ, the one who shook the foundations of his world for the sake of those who have been left on the margins, those who were unseen except by God. Christ is who has always been at the core of our foundations, but 2020 has been a reminder to keep checking our foundations to make sure Christ is where we anchor ourselves.

As we wait again for the shaker of foundations, the light of the world, Emmanuel to come into the world again this Christmas, I pray that as much as 2020 has been a year of shaken foundations, 2021 will be a year of rebuilding, a year of focusing on our future. A future where we have and continue to learn from our reflections, pain, and learnings this year A future where we begin to rebuild, from our foundation, the Church God is calling us to be.

Merry Christmas,  
Heather

**The Southeast Conference Office will be closed December 24 – January 3. We will check phone messages for emergencies. Regular phone messages and emails will be returned on January 4.**

## News from the Conference Office

### End-of-the-Year Procedures and Financial Deadlines

The end of 2020 is fast approaching, and we need your help to make our year-end bookkeeping and crediting as efficient and timely as possible. All 2020 OCWM and UCC Special Offering checks must **arrive at the Conference Office by January 11** to receive credit for 2020 Giving.

Because of the issues with mail delays, it is recommended that remittances be made earlier in December. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Heather Fosburgh at [hforburgh@secucc.org](mailto:hforburgh@secucc.org) or 404-719-6572.

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### SEC Annual Meeting June 18-19, 2021

Want to be part of creating something new? With the decision of the Board of Directors to have a virtual Annual Meeting in 2021, we are seeking individuals who are interested in planning creative opportunities for virtual worship, workshops, and business. If you are interested, please contact Char Burch ([cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org)).

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## Clergy Zoom Connections for December

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**

Tuesday, December 22 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central); Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>

- **Lament to Hope Service Recording Available**

Did you miss the Lament to Hope Service on December 1? You can access the recording by contacting Heather Fosburgh at [hfosburgh@secucc.org](mailto:hfosburgh@secucc.org). Thank you to the Planning Team of Henrietta Andrews, Sandra Mullins, James Schwarzlose, and harpist Jean Norton for creating and leading a meaningful, reflective experience for our clergy.

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## Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

### Week of December 20

- Pleasant Hill Community Church; Pleasant Hill, Tennessee

- Tiffany Gibson Cox
- Eddie Colf
- Andrew Kim
- Nelson Kittle
- William Wilson Jr

### Week of December 27

- Kirkwood UCC; Atlanta, GA
- Jennifer Crane
- Sarah Kim
- Bill Lawrence
- Sharon Temple
- Karl Whiteman

## Prayer Requests

- We were saddened to hear about the death of the brother of **Rev. Bennie Liggins** (Unity UCC, Montgomery, AL) on December 6. Please keep Bennie and his family in prayer.
- We also lift up prayers for the family of **Robin Markham** who passed away on November 16 at the age of 92. Robin had served with his wife, Fran as a missionary in Angola, Zambia, and India, using his skills as a civil engineer and teacher. Robin had been living with his wife, who had passed away in March, at Uplands Village, Pleasant Hill, TN.

## Clergy Transitions

- **Rev. Ellen Sims** will be retiring from full-time ministry at the end of December. She is the founding pastor of Open Table UCC in Mobile, AL.
- Open Table UCC in Mobile has called **Rev. Joshua B. Noah** as their new pastor.
- **Rev. Dr. Ann Michele Rogers-Brigham**'s last Sunday at Safe Harbor Family Church in Clinton, MS is December 27, 2020.
- **Safe Harbor Family Church** has called Rev. Dr. Shelli Poe as the new pastor.

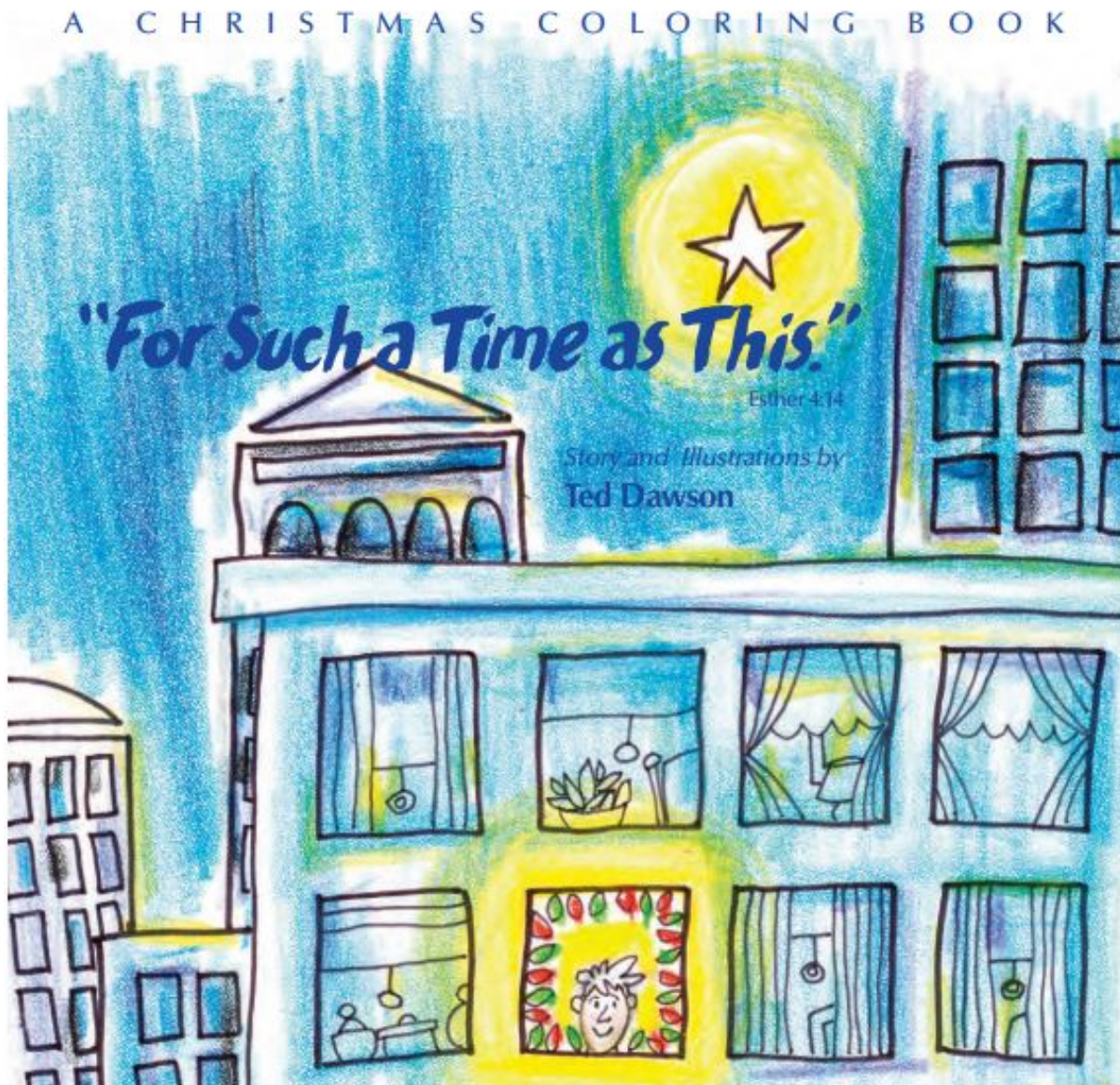
## Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Open Table, Mobile AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN; Safe



Harbor Family Church, Clinton MS

## News from the Wider Church



### The Christmas Fund – UCC Special Offering

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

In 2019, The Christmas Fund supported:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 350 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,347,419)
- Health premium supplementation for 144 retired clergy and lay employees (\$374,577)
- Emergency grants for 69 individuals and families (\$123,727)
- Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 521 retired clergy and lay employees (\$260,500)

Also, once again this year, there is a **wonderful coloring book available for FREE** for download from the Pension Boards website. It is especially relevant this year, as it talks about the pandemic and quarantine and how it relates to our faith. [Download the Coloring Book.](#)

For more information: <https://www.pbucc.org/index.php/christmas-fund-home>.



## A Very UCC Christmas: 2020

The staff of the national setting is providing an array of worship resources for Advent and Christmas: Eleven digital hymns are ready for download and use now. A Christmas Pageant and Full Worship Service is in process.

Check the website at [https://www.ucc.org/christmas\\_pageant\\_2020](https://www.ucc.org/christmas_pageant_2020).

The 11 Digital hymns as music videos are as follows:

- O Come, O Come Emmanuel (with John 1: 1-5)
- In the Bleak Midwinter (with Luke 2: 1-5)
- Star of Country Down (with Luke 1: 46-56)
- Away In a Manger /Santo Santo Santo
- O Come All Ye Faithful
- Each Winter as the Year Grows Older - v 1 & 3
- Jesus, Jesus, What a Wonderful Child
- Angels We Have Heard on High
- O Little Town of Bethlehem
- Silent Night
- Go Tell it on the Mountain

In addition, the Lessons and Carols will be streamed on Christmas Eve for all on Facebook and Youtube as Thursdays for the Soul (3:30 p.m. ET/ 2:30 p.m. CT/ 1:30 p.m. MT/ 12:30pm PT/ 11:30 a.m. Alaska, and 10:30 a.m. HI).

The Full Movie "A Very UCC Christmas: 2020" will be streamed on our platforms (YouTube and Facebook) on Dec. 27, 10 a.m. ET.

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## New Executive Director for BBM Announced

The Board of Directors of Back Bay Mission are pleased to announce that in February 2021, Rev. James Pennington will be the new Executive Director of Back Bay Mission. Rev. Pennington, a Mississippian, has most recently served as Senior Pastor at UCC churches in Phoenix, Arizona, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. His accomplishments in these two ministries included providing extensive services for feeding people experiencing homelessness; being an advocate for migrants at the border; and conducting recovery groups, transgender support groups, and racial reconciliation groups. His years of ministry reflects a commitment to serving vulnerable communities in ways that support inclusivity and diversity.



Rev. Pennington brings a wealth of experience in building strong community partnerships between minority communities and public service agencies. He earned a Bachelor of Science from the University of Chicago/Concordia University and a Master of Arts in Divinity from



Concordia Seminary and Washington University. Born and raised until 11 years old in Booneville, MS, Rev. Pennington's roots are in Mississippi soil and he continues to have family in Mississippi.

## Local Church News

### Musical Offerings from First Congregational Atlanta

Festival Sounds of the Season, the **Trey Clegg Singers** present a virtual Christmas Concert, Saturday, Dec. 19, 6:00 p.m. [Visit the website](#). [Preview trailer](#). Don't forget that **First Congregational Church** presents, "A Midweek Musical Meditation" with Trey Clegg at noon on Wednesdays. [www.facebook.com/firstchurchatl](http://www.facebook.com/firstchurchatl) [www.youtube.com/user/firstchurchatl](https://www.youtube.com/user/firstchurchatl)

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### UCC-related Tougaloo College Awards Daniel Presidential Citation

Earlier this fall, [Tougaloo \(Miss.\) College](#), a Historically Black College founded by the UCC's American Missionary Association, presented the Rev. Kenneth V. Daniel, CEO and president of [United Church Homes](#), with its prestigious Presidential Citation during the college's 151st Founders' Convocation. The award was presented for Daniel's lifelong work and commitment to senior healthcare and housing services.

Daniel accepted the award after delivering a keynote address for the college's 151st Founders' Convocation. "At the core of United Church Homes is an inclusive culture, committed to welcoming, hearing and valuing individuals from different races, genders, ages, religions, identities, and experiences," said Daniel. "I am honored to receive an award from an esteemed college that embraces a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion." [Read more on the CHHSM website](#).

## Trainings and Conferences

### The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar for Pastors and Lay Leaders

This seminar offers an opportunity to explore faithful, practical, and tested ways to promote generosity in your congregation. The Seminar will draw on



current research, guidance from the wisdom of scripture, and discussion of the best practices in church-based fundraising. The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar for 2021 will include six online sessions and will be taught by the Rev. Andy DeBraber and Rev. Andrew Warner, Generosity Officers of the national setting. Tuesdays – Feb. 9, Feb. 23, Mar. 9, Mar. 23, Apr. 13, and Apr. 23: 6:30pm Eastern to 8:00pm Eastern In between class sessions, Andy and Andrew will provide materials to help analyze the culture of your own congregation and learn how to create change. Be sure to recruit at least a team of two for this program. Changing the culture of your congregation requires more than one dedicated leader. Success depends on engaging a team of leaders from your congregation. [REGISTER](#)

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## UCC Minister is Visiting Professor at McAfee in Atlanta

The **Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, III** is the McAfee School of Theology Visiting Professor of Preaching for the spring semester of 2021. Dr. Moss is Senior Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. Moss is an honors graduate of Morehouse College. He earned a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Chicago Theological Seminary. He was recently recognized as one of the “12 Most Effective Preachers in the English-Speaking World” by Baylor University. For information on auditing his course and other classes at McAfee, [click here](#).

## Conference Calendar

December 24, 2020 - January 3, 2021

[Conference Office Closed for Christmas Holiday](#)

January 4, 2021 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

[Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders](#)

January 5, 2021 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 9, 2021 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm EST

[Board of Directors Retreat](#)

January 12, 2021 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 19, 2021 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 21, 2021 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST

[Commission on Ministry Meeting](#)

January 25, 2021 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

[Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders](#)

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

## Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch**; [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org)

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; [hfosburgh@secucc.org](mailto:hfosburgh@secucc.org)

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; [cmoss@secucc.org](mailto:cmoss@secucc.org)

Director of Communications: **Don Harris**; [dharris@secucc.org](mailto:dharris@secucc.org)

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